DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 168 072 CS 502 384

AUTHOR Lashbrook, Velma J.; And Others
TITLE The Effects of Social Style on Perceived Conflict and Success in Debate.
PUB DATE Nov 78
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (64th, Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 2-5, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Assertiveness; Competition; *Conflict; *Debate; Higher Education; *Individual Characteristics; *Interpersonal Competence; Predictor Variables; Social Relations; *Success Factors; Verbal Communication
IDENTIFIERS *Social Style

ABSTRACT

A study was designed to examine debater characteristics in terms of perceived social style (assertiveness and responsiveness) and to explore the effects of debater social style in terms of perceived substantive and interpersonal conflict and debate success. Measures of perceived assertiveness, responsiveness, social style, and conflict were obtained for 96 college debaters participating in 158 cross-examination type debates. The findings revealed the following: it is possible to classify debaters by social style based on data provided by other debaters, not all debaters have the same social style, individuals who are more assertive receive higher speaker points than those who are less assertive, social style has limited ability to predict the degree of substantive conflict, and highly responsive individuals engage in less interpersonal conflict than do less responsive persons. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED168072

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL STYLE ON PERCEIVED CONFLICT AND SUCCESS IN DEBATE

by

Velma J. Lashbrook, Auburn University

William B. Lashbrook, Auburn University

Connie Bacon, University of Oklahoma

Steve Salinger, Auburn University

David A. Thomas, Auburn University

Speech Communication Association

Minneapolis, MN

November 1978

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Velma J. Lashbrook

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

CS502 384

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL STYLE ON PERCEIVED

CONFLICT AND SUCCESS IN DEBATE

An Abstract

This research examined the relationship between the social style of debaters and the amount and type of conflict that manifested itself in a cross-examination forensic event. In addition, the study looked at social style differences between team members as a predictor of success in debate.

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL STYLE ON PERCEIVED CONFLICT AND SUCCESS IN DEBATE

Many researchers have been concerned with the identification of characteristics that distinguish between debaters and nondebaters or between successful and unsuccessful debaters. McGlone and Andersen[1] have both provided summaries and critiques of quantitative research in debate. Both have also called for more research concerned with the identification of debater characteristics.

The present investigation attempts to examine debater characteristics in terms of perceived social style (assertiveness and responsiveness). The effects of debater social style are explored in terms of perceived substantive and interpersonal conflict (issue and personality clash) and debate success (speaker points and win-loss record).

Debater Characteristics

Researchers concerned with the effects of debate participation have assessed a large number of skills and personality or perceptual attributes. Prior research has examined the relationship between debate and critical thinking ability,[2] intelligence,[3] logical reasoning,[4] speech training,[5] attitude change[6] and ethics.[7] In studying debate success, researchers have investigated the compatibility of encoding behaviors,[8] sex of the debaters,[9] and experience in debate.[10]

Of more central concern to the present investigation are the studies which explored the personality or perceptual attributes of debaters.[11] The literature suggests that debaters have greater needs

and are perceived more positively than nondebaters on task-oriented dimensions of personality (achievement, dominance and credibility). However, the evidence on relationship-orientation is inconclusive.

Most of the research on personality and perceptual attributes has focused on differences between debaters and nondebaters. Often these comparisons have been made in terms of self report measures. The present investigation examines differences between college debaters and the normal population of college students on the basis of the perceptual attributes assigned by others. The perceptual attributes of assertiveness (a task-oriented dimension) and responsiveness (a relationship-oriented dimension) determine an individual's social style. A debater's social style is based on her/his communicative behaviors as perceived by others. Thus, debaters' social styles may provide a clearer and more behaviorally based description of the distinction between debaters and nondebaters and between successful and unsuccessful debaters.

Concept of Social Style

A person's social style is defined in terms of perceived assertiveness and responsiveness. Perceived assertiveness refers to ". . . the perceived effort a person makes to influence or control the thoughts and actions of others,"[12] and perceived responsiveness is defined as ". . . the perceived effort persons make to control their emotions when relating to others."[13] Quartile norms have been established for both the assertiveness and responsiveness scores. These norms are used to classify individuals according to four social styles: Analytical, Amiable, Driver and Expressive. A person perceived to be low in both

assertiveness and responsiveness is said to have an Analytical social style. Amiables are perceived as low in assertiveness and high in responsiveness, while Drivers are low in responsiveness and high in assertiveness. The Expressive social style is seen as high in terms of both assertiveness and responsiveness.

It seems reasonable to suggest that persons of dissimilar social styles could well react to conflict situations in different ways. Further, how a person reacts to conflict may well be a defining characteristic of the situation itself as well as a determinant of its outcome.

Conflict

Conflict has been defined as "that state of a social relationship in which incompatible interests between two or more parties gives rise to a struggle between them."[14] Numerous researchers have attempted to define the properties that must be present for conflict to exist. Essentially, there must be competition between two or more persons for scarce resources (e.g., winning, obtaining a leadership position, influencing someone or some group).[15]

Conflict may exist on a variety of dimensions. Most researchers and writers[16] use either three (substantive, procedural and interpersonal) or two (substantive and interpersonal) factors to describe conflict. Substantive conflict is disagreement that arises over a task and procedural conflict refers to differences over agenda setting or how to accomplish a task. Since the distinction between these two is not consistently made, only substantive conflict was examined in this study.

The presence of substantive conflict is generally a function of the situation, the beliefs and attitudes of the participants, and the degree to which members are motivated and/or able to express their disagreement. Situational tasks which demand participant expression of differences increase the likelihood that substantive conflict will exist.

Interpersonal conflict, on the other hand, depends largely on the characteristics of the individuals involved. Apfelbaum[17] has argued that the degree of conflict is negatively related to the perceived continuity of the relationship, interpersonal reactivity or perceived interdependence, and similarity among individuals.

Debate as Conflict

This research is predicated on the notion that the defining characteristics of the debate activity and its participants creates a conflict situation. Rules for debate set up a competitive struggle for scarce resources (e.g., winning) and encourage the expression of differences over task issues. Thus, debate is almost an operational definition of substantive conflict. The nature of the activity does not facilitate continuity of relationships or interdependence between opponents and, thus, creates a setting where interpersonal conflict may also emerge.

Further, with the advent of cross-examination debate, the potential for open conflict between debaters of differing social styles is heightened. It is in the question-answer period that the styles of the participants come to the forefront, since the spontaneous exchange of

messages does not require immediate integration into a more organized presentation such as a constructive or rebuttal speech.

Rationale

Since a debate can be considered an inherently conflictual situation, one might wonder what type of person would be attracted to and/or remain associated with such an activity. Previous research on personal characteristics indicates that debaters have higher needs for achievement and dominance and more confidence in their ability to handle situations than nondebaters. In terms of perceptions, debaters enjoy a rather positive image particularly on dimensions related to their assertiveness.[17] However, debaters have sometimes been perceived to be argumentative, boisterous, etc.[18] suggesting that they may not be perceived as highly responsive. Since the social style literature indicates that persons perceive those with whom they experience conflict to be less responsive we would expect debaters to also perceive each other similarly. Finally, since the avoidance and acquiescent tendencies of low assertives are not likely to be associated with debate participation, we would expect debaters to be perceived as more assertive than the general population. With regard to the characteristic of debaters, we would, therefore, hypothesize:

(1) More debaters will be perceived as highly assertive than lowly assertive.

(2) More debaters will be perceived as lowly responsive than highly responsive.

(3) More debaters will be classified as Drivers than as Expressives, Analyticals or Amiables.

With respect to success in debate we would expect the following hypothesis to hold:

(4) The perceived assertiveness of a debater will be positively correlated with his/her assigned speaker points.

Although assertiveness is probably the most important attribute related to debate success, responsiveness becomes important when individuals have comparable levels of assertiveness. Thus the following hypothesis should hold:

(5) Expressive debaters will receive higher speaker points than Drivers who will receive higher speaker points than Amiables who will receive higher speaker points than Analyticals.

In terms of win-loss record, we must examine the characteristics of the team rather than the individuals. Since individuals with dissimilar social styles are likely to clash on different issues or develop their arguments differently, react to conflict differently, and have different delivery styles; they are more likely, than debaters with similar styles, to complement each other and maximize adaptation to the judge's social style. Although it might be argued that these differences could result in inconsistent or contradictory positions, we believe that prior experience in debate would minimize such effects. Thus, we would predict that:

(6) Debate teams with dissimilar social styles will win a higher proportion of their debates than teams with similar social styles.

A final issue involves the nature of conflict, substantive and interpersonal, between teams involved in a debate. Substantive conflict, in the debate situation relates to the degree to which the participants clash or disagree on issues. Since highly assertive individuals tend to be more able or willing to express such disagreement, we would hypothesize that:

(7) The degree of perceived substantive conflict will increase as the number of highly assertive persons in a debate increases.

Since interpersonal conflict or hostility among persons is more likely to occur between highly assertive (because they are willing to express conflict) and lowly responsive individuals (because they are not concerned with maintaining relationships) we would predict that:

(8) The degree of perceived interpersonal conflict will increase as the number of highly assertive persons in a debate increases.

(9) The degree of perceived interpersonal conflict will decrease as the number of highly responsive persons in a debate increases.

Finally, since dissimilarity is likely to facilitate interpersonal conflict, we would hypothesize that:

(10) The degree of perceived interpersonal conflict will increase as the number of different social styles represented in a debate increases.

Method

The basic data for the study was provided by 96 college debaters participating in 158 cross-examination type debates held during the Auburn University Plainsman Debate Tournament in January 1978. The measures of perceived assertiveness, responsiveness and social style for the debaters were obtained by having opposing debaters complete the Social Style Profile on one member of their opposition at the end of each of four debates. The measures of conflict were obtained from the judges of each debate by having them complete a conflict (clash) questionnaire developed for the research. The win-loss records of the debate teams and the speaker points assigned to the individual debaters were based on the judge's completion of the AFA-Form C ballot. While 158 debate ballots were filled out by the judges only 139 debates provided complete sets of data for testing the conflict hypotheses of the research.

A debater's perceived assertiveness was based on the average score he or she received on the sum of eight scales used to define the quality by the Wilson Learning Corporation.[18] This procedure resulted in an assertiveness score with a 8-56 range with an established reliability of .89. A debater's perceived responsiveness was based on the average score he or she received on the sum of five scales used to define the

quality by Wilson Learning. This procedure resulted in a responsiveness score with a 5 to 35 range and an established reliability of .86.

A debater's social style (Analytical, Amiable, Driver or Expressive) and level of assertiveness (high or low) and level of responsiveness (high or low) were obtained by matching her/his perceived scores against population norms established by the Wilson Learning Corporation. These norms are based on the processing of approximately 5,000 Social Style Profiles across a variety of persons and contexts.[19]

The amount of substantive conflict in a debate was operationalized as the sum of four Likert-type scales designed to measure such conflict as perceived by the judge of the debate. This procedure resulted in a substantive conflict score in the range of 4-20 with a calculated reliability of .90.[20]

The amount of interpersonal conflict in a debate was operationalized as the sum of four Likert-type scales designed to measure such conflict as perceived by the judge of the debate. This procedure resulted in an interpersonal conflict score in the range of 4-20 with a calculated reliability of .84.

The number of high assertives and high responsives in a debate was based on the quartile ratings of the four participating debaters. To be high in assertiveness/responsiveness a debater had to be in the upper two quartiles of the sample[21] on the two qualities as used to define his/her social style. Thus the number of high assertives/responsives in a debate could range from 0 to 4.

Hypothesis 1-3 were tested with the chi-square statistic when appropriate. Hypothesis 4 was tested by a product moment correlation

statistic. Hypothesis 5 was tested by analysis of variance followed by t-tests when appropriate. Hypothesis 6 was tested by a z-statistic for differences between proportions. Hypotheses 7-10 were tested via analysis of variance followed by appropriate t-tests. The reliability of the measures of conflict were determined by calculating the internal consistency of the scales used to operationalize the types of conflict. All statistical tests were made at the alpha .05 level.

Results

Hypothesis 1 suggested that more debaters would be perceived as highly assertive than lowly assertive. When compared to population norms for assertiveness, 30 debaters were perceived to be high in assertiveness and 66 low in assertiveness. While this difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 13.5$, $p < .05$) it was in the direction opposite to the prediction. Thus, hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that more debaters would be perceived as lowly responsive than highly responsive. When compared to population norms for responsiveness 90 debaters were perceived to be low in responsiveness and only 6 high. This difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 73.5$, $p < .05$). Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 suggested that more debaters would be classified as Drivers (high assertive, low responsive) than as Expressives, Analyticals or Amiables. As the results for hypotheses 1 and 2 would suggest most debaters were classified as Analyticals (N = 65, 68%) in this study. Only 25 (26%) were classified as Drivers as predicted. Thus, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 suggested that the perceived assertiveness of a debater would be positively correlated with his/her assigned speaker points by a judge. The calculated correlation between assertiveness scores and speaker points was .36 ($p < .05$). While the correlation could not be considered high, it was supportive of the relationship suggested by hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5 suggested that Expressive debaters would receive higher speaker points than Drivers who would receive higher points than Amiables who would receive higher points than Analyticals. There was an insufficient number of Expressives ($N = 4$) and Amiables ($N = 1$) to test hypothesis 5 in total. By lumping Amiables with Analyticals and Expressives with Drivers we were able to establish that highly assertive debaters ($\bar{X} = 54.23$) received significantly more speaker points ($t = 2.92$, $p < .05$) than lowly assertive debaters ($\bar{X} = 48.08$).[22] Thus, hypothesis 5 received limited support.

Hypothesis 6 suggested that debate teams composed of members with dissimilar social styles would win more debates than teams composed of similar social styles. The record for teams with dissimilar social style was 95 wins, 69 losses. The record for teams with similar social styles was 63 wins, 89 losses. Using the statistical proportion of wins, the teams with dissimilar styles (60%) won significantly ($z = 2.89$, $p < .05$) more of their debates than teams of similar social style (39%). Thus, hypothesis 6 was supported.

Hypothesis 7 suggested that the degree (amount) of perceived substantive conflict in a debate would increase as a function of the number of highly assertive people participating in the activity. The

results of the study showed no significant differences ($F = .44$, $p < .05$) between debates with 0 to 4 highly assertive participants in terms of perceived substantive conflict. Thus, hypothesis 7 was not supported.

Hypothesis 8 suggested that the degree (amount) of perceived interpersonal conflict in a debate would increase as a function of the number of highly assertive people participating in the activity. The results of the study showed no significant differences ($F = 1.35$, $p < .05$) between debates with 0-4 highly assertive participants in terms of perceived interpersonal conflict. Thus, hypothesis 8 was not supported.

Hypothesis 9 suggested that the degree (amount) of perceived interpersonal conflict in a debate would decrease as a function of the number of highly responsive people participating in the activity. The results of the study showed a significant difference ($F = 3.27$, $p < .05$) between debates with 0-4 highly responsive participants in terms of perceived interpersonal conflict. Individual comparisons showed no differences between debates with 0 to 3 ($\overline{X} = 10.05$) highly responsive individuals. However, for debates with 4 highly responsive participants ($\overline{X} = 6.27$) there was a significant ($t = 2.02$, $p < .05$) drop in perceived interpersonal conflict. Thus, hypothesis 9 received limited support.

Hypothesis 10 suggested that perceived interpersonal conflict would increase as the number of different social styles represented in the debate increased. Since 94% of the participant debaters were perceived to be either Analyticals or Drivers, the researchers decided

that the sample was not sufficiently representative to warrant a test of hypothesis 10. Thus, hypothesis 10 remains an empirical question.

Conclusions

The prime purpose for this research was to relate the perceived social style of debaters to success in debate and amount and type of conflict promoted by the activity. A few basic questions were answered within the context of the present study:

1. It is possible to classify debaters by social style based on data provided by other debaters. However, since the perceptions are so contextually based, they may not reflect the views that friends and associates outside of the debate situation hold. Future research is needed to identify whether debaters perceive other debaters differently than nondebaters do.
2. Not all debaters have the same social style. Although two-thirds of the debaters in this study were perceived to be Analytical, the other three styles were also represented.
3. Debate partners with different social styles are more successful than teams composed of individuals with similar styles. As many coaches have guessed for years, complimentary styles are more effective than redundancy in debate.
4. Individuals who are more assertive receive higher speaker points than those who are less assertive. Debate, as a competitive activity, rewards the assertive, task-oriented individual. Although we suspect that responsiveness also

makes a difference, there were too few highly responsive debaters in this sample to provide an adequate test.

5. Social style has limited ability to predict the degree of substantive conflict. Since issue clash depends so heavily on a debater's personal skill and the skill of the opponents, the degree to which social style affects the amount of conflict is probably mediated by other variables.
6. Highly responsive individuals engage in less interpersonal conflict than lowly responsive persons. Due to their heightened concern for the relationship, the finding is not surprising.

One major problem associated with this particular piece of research was the fact that the tournament upon which data were collected may not have attracted the complete range of debaters in terms of assertiveness, responsiveness and social style. From the beginning, the researchers recognized this point and were careful not to overstate their suppositions or findings. Despite this rather obvious limitation and a general reluctance to declare closure on issues relating social style to the debate activity, the researchers feel they have provided a bases upon which to continue to explore debater characteristics and identify qualities relevant to success in debate. These are questions whose answers are long overdue, because the debate tournament has not been the traditional forum for the empirical researcher.

Footnotes

1. Kenneth E. Andersen, "Quantitative Research in Debate," JAFA, 3 (1966), 112-115. Edward L. McGlone, "The Behavioral Effects of Forensics Participation," JAFA 10 (1974), 140-146.

2. William S. Howell, "The Effects of High School Debating on Critical Thinking," Speech Monographs, 10 (1943), 96-103; Winston L. Brembeck, "The Effects of a Course in Argumentation on Critical Thinking Ability," Speech Monographs, 16 (1949), 177-189; Teddy R. Jackson, "The Effects of Intercollegiate Debating on Critical Thinking Ability," Unpubl. Ph.D. University of Wisconsin, 1961; Charles Gruner, Richard Huseman, and James Luck, "Debating Ability, Critical Thinking and Authoritarianism," Speaker and Gavel, 8 (1971), 63-64; and Richard Huseman, Glenn Ware, and Charles Gruner, "Critical Thinking, Reflective Thinking, and the Ability to Organize Ideas: A Multivariate Approach," JAFA, 9 (1972), 261-265.

3. Richard N. Thompson, "How Do Debaters Rank in Intelligence?" National Forensic League Bulletin, 3 (1929), 6-7; and Bert Bradley, Jr., "Debate--Practical Training for Gifted Students," Speech Teacher, 8 (1959), 134-138.

4. Earl R. Bradley and Anne M. Mulianey, "Logical Reasoning and Success in Speech Contests," Forensic, 50 (1964), 9-15.

5. Leroy Lewis, "The Effect of High School Debating on College Speech Training," QJS, 28 (1942), 27-30.

6. Clayton H. Schrug, "A Study of Attitude Change Toward Debate Propositions among High School and College Debaters," Speech Teacher, 3 (1954), 15-19.

7. Carl E. Larson and Kim Giffin, "Ethical Considerations in the Attitudes and Practices of College Debaters," JAFA, 1 (1964) 86-90; Robert P. Newman and Keith R. Sanders, "A Study in the Integrity of Evidence," JAFA, 2 (1965), 7-13; Stanley G. Reives, "1970 National Debate Tournament Final Debate: Should the Federal Government Grant Annually a Specific Percentage of Its Income Tax Revenue to the States," JAFA, 7 (1970), 159-187; and James A. Benson, "The Use of Evidence in Intercollegiate Debate," JAFA, 7 (1971), 259-270.

8. R. R. Allen, "The Effects of Interpersonal and Concept Compatibility of the Encoding Behavior and Achievement of Debate Teams," CSSJ, 14 (1963), 23-26.

9. Wayne E. Hensley and David B. Strother, "Success in Debate," ST, 17 (1968), 235-237; Michael T. Hayes and Joe McAdoo, "Debate Performance: Differences Between Male and Female Rankings," JAFA, 8 (1972), 127-131; and Velma J. Lashbrook, "Sex Differences in Self-Image, Debate Proficiency, and Topic Proficiency," Unpubl. paper SCA Convention, New York, 1973.

10. Charles R. Helgesen, "An Investigation of the Relationship Between the Debate Effectiveness of Michigan High School Debaters and a Number of Other Variables," Diss. Denver 1962; Abstracted in SM, 30 (1963), 181; and S. Clay Wilmington, "A Study of Selected Factors (sic) to Debate Effectiveness and to Debate Rating Reliability," Diss. Northwestern 1967; Abstracted in SM, 35 (1968), 337.

11. Duane F. Hellinger and Richard A. Hildreth, "Personality Characteristics of Debaters," QJS, 47 (1961), 398-401; Raymond K. Tucker, Jerry W. Koehler, and Lynne Mlady, "The Image of the College Debaters," JAFA, 4 (1967), 1-9; Thomas R. King and Gregg Phifer, "The College Debater as Seen by Himself and by His Peers," JAFA, 5 (1968), 48-52; and John R. Stewart and Jerold J. Merchant, "Perceived Differences Between Debaters and Nondebaters," JAFA, 6 (1969), 67-72.

12. Wilson Learning Corporation, Social Style Sales Strategies (Eden Prairie, MN: Wilson Learning Corporation, 1977), p. 38.

13. Ibid., p. 39.

14. Herbert W. Simons, Perspectives on Communication in Social Conflict, edited by Herbert W. Simons and Gerald R. Miller (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 8.

15. Raymond W. Mack and Richard C. Snyder, "The Analysis of Social Conflict: Toward an Overview and Synthesis," in Conflict Resolution Through Communication, edited by Fred E. Jandt (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

16. Mae A. Bell, "The Effects of Substantive and Affective Conflict in Problem-Solving Groups," SM, 41 (1974), 12-23; H. Guetzkow and J. Gyr, "An Analysis of Conflict in Decision-Making Groups," Human Relations, 7 (1954), 367-382; Thomas J. Knutson, Velma J. Lashbrook, and Arthur D. M. Heemer, "Dimensions of Small Group Conflict: A Factor Analytic Study," Unpubl. paper ICA Convention, Portland, 1976; Albert C. Kowitz and Thomas J. Knutson, "Effects of Information Type and Orientation on Consensus-Achievement in Substantive and Affective Small-Group Conflict," Unpubl. paper WSCA Convention, Seattle, 1975.

17. Erika Apfelbaum, "On Conflicts and Bargaining," in Advances in Experimental Social Psychology (vol. 7), edited by Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

18. Velma J. Lashbrook, William B. Lashbrook and Steven W. Buchholz, "The Statistical Adequacy of the Social Style Profile," Wilson Learning Corporation, Eden Prairie, Minn., 1977.

19. Ibid.

20. Jum C. Nunnally, Psychometric Theory (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 210-211.

21. Due to the disproportionate number of debaters falling in the lower two quartiles for both assertiveness and responsiveness, sample statistics were used to test the hypotheses relevant to this distinction. Thus, the determination of whether a debater was classified as high or low was based on whether her/his score was above or below the median for this sample.

22. Since varsity and junior varsity debate used ballots with different ranges for speaker points, data were normalized (N(50,10)) for these comparisons.